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Campbell Chapel FWBC - Sermon



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Hope Through Jesus Christ

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Bob Bradley

Mark 1:40-45

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41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

42 And, as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

Several months ago, maybe a year or two ago, we went through this in our study as we studied through the book of Mark. I do not remember how long it has been. The Lord impressed this upon my heart today. There is probably not a week goes by that we do not talk to someone, are around someone, or we hear someone talking about how they just feel like giving up.

I had a phone call a couple of days ago from an individual. I would not have any idea how much money they may be worth. I would not have any idea how many possessions, if you put it all together, how much they would be worth. However, as I talked to this individual, all of that did not really mean anything. Nothing they had accumulated in their few short years of life really meant anything because they felt hopeless and helpless. They felt like nobody cared. They felt like nobody could do anything for them. They felt like nothing was ever going to change and that they were going to live the rest of their days here—ever how many there was—in the same shape and in the same mess that they were in.

Listen.

We do not ever want to give up hope. We do not ever want to give up hope.

The situation in Haiti is a horrible tragedy. The death, suffering, and sorrow that is there is probably beyond our imaginations tonight. Even though all that may be true, we still yet need never to give up hope.

There is a God in heaven that loves us and cares about us, cares about those people and loves those people. He will help those people and bless those people if they will just look to Him.

In saying that tonight, we read to you here about a leper. A leper, during the days of Jesus, if you ever did much studying about a leper, it would break your heart. Leprosy was a horrible disease. If you contracted leprosy, it was a disease that was like a cancer. It would start eating on your fingers, on your toes, or eating on some part of your body. It would just start eating and eating. After a while, your finger would fall off. After a while, your hands would fall off, or your arms would fall off. Perhaps it ate your ears, head, or your nose or whatever. It was a horrible disease.

When you contracted leprosy, it was a death sentence because there was no cure for you. You were going to die with leprosy. It was a horrible disease that brought suffering to the flesh, and when you contracted leprosy, you had to be separated from everyone else. They separated you from your family. You could not go to church, synagogue, or temple. They made you live on the outside of the city. You could not live on the inside of the city. You could not touch anybody. Nobody could touch you. You were dressed in black. You had to cover up your mouth with a garment. You were not allowed to get closer than six feet to people. Could you imagine how people must have felt, how discouraging it would have been for you.

Get this.

Either you were in the position of this leper, or you are in his position tonight. You can put yourself in the story. We need to do that because either every one of us has been there or we are there tonight.

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

This leper that was here was very sick. He was very lonely. He was depressed. He thought he was going to die this way. He could not be around his family. He could not do the normal things that we do in life. He could not do those things. He absolutely could not do any of those things. Yet, somewhere along the way, he heard about the message of Jesus Christ.

39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

The Bible says that Jesus had been preaching here throughout Galilee. He had been preaching, teaching, and all that, but the Bible says here that He had been curing people of all kinds of diseases.

You think about this fellow here just for a moment. Put yourself in his shoes. You have leprosy. I do not know how far his leprosy was but when read in Luke 5; you will find out that he was full of leprosy. When you look at the phrase in the Greek, it will tell you that he was full of sores. They were probably from the top of his head to the sole of his feet and all over his body. He had cancerous, leprosy sores all over him. He was full of it. However, he could still yet get around. He could still yet move around.

Somewhere along the line, he has heard about Jesus Christ. If you go back to Matthew 8, which talks about the same event, you will find out that Jesus Christ has been on the mountain. He has been

preaching and teaching what we call the Sermon on the Mount. Do remember Matthew 5-7 where He talks about many different things. Jesus had been preaching, teaching, and He is coming down from the mountain when He is met here by this leper. This guy had no hope of ever being cured by doctors. He had no hope of ever getting over and getting rid of his leprosy. He had no hope of that in the natural sense. However, he heard about this guy called Jesus that had been preaching and teaching. He had been changing people's lives. He may have heard some of Jesus' messages. I do not know. However, I do know one thing. When he heard that there is a guy that could heal him—and there is no doubt in my mind that when this guy heard about what Jesus had been doing—he knew that his disease, even though incurable, was no worse than the diseases that Jesus had already been healing. He understood that. That gave this guy hope.

When he heard about a man who had been raised in Nazareth, that had come down and had been preaching and teaching; when he heard about a guy that was healing people then that gave him hope. Something started growing within him. Do you know what that was? That was faith.

There was a time in my life and in your life when we were just like this leper was in that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. The reason here that lepers dressed in black, for all practical purposes and intent, they were actually already dead. They were dead religiously. They were dead spiritually. Basically, they were dead physically. That is why they dressed in black.

There was a time in my life and in your life that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. We had no hope. We had no hope of getting out of the mess that we were in. Do you know what we did? Many times, we tried to quit our bad habits. We tried to quit all of these things. We tried to quit all these things that were killing us. However, do you know what we found out? We found out that we could not do that. We could not quit those things on our own.

It is great, just like this guy, we heard about a man called Jesus one time. We heard about Him. Not only did we hear about Him, but we also saw some of the people here that Jesus had changed. It is great to know tonight and to see tonight what God can do to an individual that is dead in trespasses and in sins, that is so wrapped up in sin that sin has got such a death grip on them—it is great that Jesus Christ can set them free and give them life. That is where we were.

I was there and you were there. We were all there. If you are saved tonight, you have been set free from that. However, if you are not saved tonight then you are still yet dead. You are spiritually dead. You might be walking around physically, but for all practical purposes and intent, you are dead. You have no hope in the situation you have right now. There is no hope for you. Let me say it this way. If you stay in the situation that you are in, there is no hope for you.

This guy heard about Jesus. He knew that if he stayed where he was at that it was over. However, do you know what he did?

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

When Jesus is coming off the mountain, when you read the other accounts, this leper comes running. He has come running to Jesus. Get this. He is not worrying about other people. He is not worrying about anybody else that is there. He is not worrying about breaking the law. He is not worrying about what people are going to think about him. He is not worrying about any of those things. He has one thing on his mind and that is getting to where Jesus is getting to where this guy is that can help him.

Listen

There are times in my life and in your life that we need to put away and put pride aside. Many people would get saved today if they did not have to make a public profession. Many people think about getting saved, but then they think about walking down an aisle or coming in a crowd somewhere and kneeling down. They do not want to do that. They are too proud to do that. Do you know what this guy understood? He knew that he was going to die. He knew that there was no other hope for him. If he stayed where he was at then he was going to die.

We were all there. We all have been there. If we are saved tonight, we were there one time. We were doomed. We were damned. We were on our way to a lake of fire. Isn't it great that we heard about Jesus one time? It may have been through a song. It may have been through a message. It may have been someone inviting us to come to church and we heard the gospel preached. When we heard the gospel preached we saw what He could do then we wanted to run toward Him.

When and if you get sick enough of your sin, you will want to run towards Him. When you get sick enough of the way that you are living, then you will run towards Jesus Christ. Do you know why many people do not? Many people do not ever live that long to get enough of their sin. The Bible says there is pleasure in sin for a season. People love their sin. They live in their sin. Many people die in their sin. Do you know why? It is because they enjoy sin and doing all those things.

This guy here heard about Jesus. He knew that He could heal him. He came running. He was not worried about the crowd. He was not worried about what the law said. He was not worried about what people thought. He was pushing his way through the crowd to get to this man called Jesus.

I would today that we had the same determination. We do not stand up and testify sometimes. Do you know why? "I cannot testify like someone else therefore I will not testify. I cannot sing like someone else therefore, I will not sing." Even though God may be instructing us or asking us to do something. We need to put those things aside and we need to be running towards Him. He is the help that we need. He is the only help that we have. He is the only hope that this guy had. Jesus Christ is the only hope that our world has today.

It is not in economics. It is not in politics. It is not in none of those things. The only hope that America has today, the only hope that the world has today is to turn to Jesus Christ. He is the only hope.

The Bible says that he came running.

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Therefore, he comes in a very humble way. He comes and he is beseeching Him, begging Him, or he is pleading with Jesus. He is kneeling down and he is right on his face before Jesus in the dirt. Do you know what he says?

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Look at what this guy already knows. He was not asking Jesus if He had enough power to heal him. That was not in this guy's mind. He said "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He understood the power that Jesus had. He understood that Jesus could cleanse him. He understood that Jesus could heal him. He understood all of that. That was not the question. The question was "If thou wilt..." "Lord if thou wilt; is it your will to cleanse me? It is not God's will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. However, that is a great question. "Lord, if it is your will, I know you can heal me, or you can cleanse me."

Every one of us that are saved tonight, we actually said the same thing one time. We come and ask the Lord to cleanse us. We came and asked the Lord to save us. We were not questioning His power, or ability. We know that He can do that. We knew that He could save us when we came to an altar or wherever we were praying. We were not questioning His power, or ability. That was not what we were doing.

Do you know what this guy says? "Lord, if it is your will, please cleanse me."

Can you remember when you asked the Lord to save you? We might not be able to remember that. Sometimes I cannot remember what I did yesterday. If we can remember those things and those times, remember when we came, where we were standing, where we were setting, or wherever it was at when we asked the Lord to forgive us of our sin. It was a great time. We had no hope. We were doomed. We were damned. We knew that Jesus Christ had the power to save us. However, do you know what we may have wondered? Some people wonder, "Will He really save me? A guy that is unclean as I am."

This guy here was the outcast of society. He was despicable. He was despised. He had been rejected. Nobody liked him. He could not be around anybody. He was in a mess. The question was not, "Does He have the power to save me?" The question was, "Will He save me? Will He cleanse me?"

The question we ask ourselves sometimes—someone mentioned, a while ago, about forgiving ourselves—the question that unsaved people ask sometimes is "Would God really forgive me? With all that I have done, as bad as I have been and all the things I have done; would God really forgive me?" They were not questioning His power or His ability to forgive them. They questioned, "Will He forgive me because of all that I have done?" This story should answer your question.

Leprosy is a type of sin. When you look at leprosy in the scriptures, it paints a tremendous picture of what sin does to our spiritual life is like what leprosy does to our physical life or bodies.

This guy came, he kneeled down, he beseeched Him, and he said, “Lord, if it is your will, you can make me clean.” This guy did not ask for a car. This guy did not ask for a new home. This guy did not ask Him to straighten up his life. Did he? This guy said, “Lord, I just want to be clean.”

Let me tell you something. There is not anything like living clean. There is nothing like living a clean life. Does that mean that we do not have issues or problems? No, it does not mean that. However, do you know what it does mean? It means that I know right now that I am living as I need to be living to go to heaven. I know right now that there is nothing separating me from the love of Almighty God. I know right now when I lay my head on my pillow tonight that there is nothing separating me from the love and protection of Almighty God. Clean living.

The reason that is going to be so great for this guy—again, I do not know how long it had been since he had hugged his family. I do not know how long it had been since he sat down at the table and ate with his family. I do not know how long it had been since he had been to church. I do not know how long it had been since somebody had hugged him, or since he had hugged someone else.

We take many things for granted. Do you know that? We take many things for granted.

This guy says, “Lord, I know if it is your will, you can me clean.” --Clean, free from defilement; clean--

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

When this guy says, “Lord, I am not questioning your power. I am not questioning your ability. I am not questioning any of those things. I am just saying, Lord, I know that if it is your will that you can cleanse me. I know, Lord, that if it is your will that this disease that I have, that is killing me, that is destroying me, that is separating me from my family, that is keeping me from going to synagogue and temple, that is keeping me on the outside of the blessing; Lord, I know that you can cleans me of that.” That touched the heart of Jesus Christ. This guy was sincere. He had come in a sincere way. His request was a sincere request. It touched the heart of Jesus Christ. All this guy wanted was to be clean. That is all that he wanted. He is asking Jesus Christ just to cleanse him. That was his desire. Jesus knew his heart. He knew how he felt. He knew all that was going on inside of him. It moved Him. It touched Him.

When sinners today seek forgiveness, it touches the heart of Almighty God. When we honestly and sincerely come, approach Jesus Christ in an honest and sincere way, and make our request as this guy made his request; “Lord, I just want to be clean.” That touches the heart of Jesus Christ. When you do that then I promise you that you are going to leave wherever you are at--cleansed. Do you know why? It is because it is His will for you to be clean. When we approach Him in the right way, He will cleanse us.

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

Nobody else wanted to touch him. Nobody else wanted to be around him. Everybody else had already written him off. Everybody else said, “He is just another leper, he is done. He is history. He is over.”

However, Jesus was not afraid to touch him. It was against the law to touch him. Jesus was not worried about it being against the law. He moved with compassion. Jesus was not worrying about what He was going to contract from this guy. Jesus just wanted to cleanse this guy. You see, He was moved with compassion. He reached His hand out and touched him then said, "I will; be thou clean."

Do you think that was a great day for this guy? I will guarantee you. As you read the book of Mark, it tells us that he was full of leprosy. To have all these sores all over you and then Jesus saying, "It is my will for you to be cleansed." Then you see all of those sores begin to disappear. That would have been a cool time. It would have been an awesome testimony for all those around him.

The same thing is true for you and me. I did not have leprosy, cancerous sores on my skin, but you and I were just as dead. We were just as separated from our Heavenly Father as this guy was. When you and I asked the Lord to cleanse us, He said, "It is my will for you to be cleansed. Be thou clean." The spots, the cancer, and the sin that was eating on our soul—He cleansed us from that. He made us clean. He made us cleaner than any lye soap you ever had.

Do you remember "Lava" soap that had the grit or sand in it? You could take that stuff, use it and it would take not only the dirt but also the skin too. You could clean yourself up with it.

Jesus Christ cleaned us up on the inside and made us clean. He said, "I will; be thou clean." Do you know what the Bible says here? The Bible says here...

42 And, as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

Do you really think that happened that quickly? Do you really think that it did? I will guarantee you that it did. The Bible said that it did. He said, "immediately" not a week, a month later. He did not have to go get some ointment and rub on it. He did not have to go to a dermatologist. It was just gone.

Do you remember when you got up from where you were praying? You went down a sinner and came up a saint. You went down dirty, and filthy. You came up clean and white. Do you remember that? We did not have to take classes to get that done. We did not have to go to school to get that done. When we ask Jesus to cleanse us, when we approach Him in the right manner and right way; then immediately we are cleansed.

The spots on his skin immediately left. The thing that was destroying him, the thing that was separating him from God, and all the other things left.

The sin that was separating us from Almighty God, the sin that was separating us from our family, from our kids and from any peace, from causing all kinds of depression and hopelessness on the inside; is it not great that when Jesus said, "It is my will for you to be cleansed." All of that was gone.

It is great to have hope tonight! Is it not great to know that our names are written down in heaven and that we are going to heaven? Is it not great to have that kind of hope? You ought to shout to the top of your lungs about that.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

When you read the gospel of John 5, you will read there about a fellow who had some issues for 38 years. Do you remember him? He was by a pool. He was waiting to get into the pool and everybody was always stepping down before him. Jesus came along one day and asked him, “Wilt thou be made whole?” He makes the statement that he has no one to help him into the water when the waters are troubled, there is always someone getting in before him. Jesus told him, “Get your bed, and get out of here. You are whole.” As you read on down through that chapter you find out that Jesus later finds him in the temple. He finds this guy in the temple and He says, “Behold, thou art made whole, go and sin no more lest a worst thing come upon thee.” That is what He said. So the guy in John 5, Jesus told him to go and sin no more because if you start sinning again, the problem you had for 38 years—you have not seen anything—because there will be a lot worse come upon you.

When you read this here in the original, it brings out the same idea when Jesus straightly charges him; He is doing the same thing to him. “You have been made clean. You are cleansed. Go and sin no more.”

Get this.

When you and I are cleansed, we need to quit sinning. When we have been cleansed, we need to quit sinning. God forgives us and when we are saved then we are forgiven and we are cleansed but most of us here, in the very short time after we were saved, we did some things that we should not have done. We may have said something that we should not have said. We may have handled something in the wrong way. The Spirit of God come along and said, “You are saved now. You do not live like that. You have been cleansed. You are my child. You do not take that trip anymore.” What I am saying is this. When we get saved or when we are cleansed, then we need to let the sin business alone. We need to stay away from the sin business. As we live, as we read our Bibles, as we pray, as we seek the face of God, and as God helps us, then the longer that we live and if we will submit to the will of God everyday then we call it progressive sanctification. What that means is that every day that I live, I separate myself more and more from this world. In other words, if we have been saved 50 years and have been living in the will of God then we should be a lot further away from sin than we were the day we got saved. When we get saved, or when we are cleansed then we need to leave the sin business alone. Christian people who have been cleansed, we do not need to sin. I do not want to take that trip. Do you? I know folks who have taken that trip and it is not a pleasant trip.

I have seen people that God has forgiven, God has used, and God has blessed then for whatever reason, they fall back into sin and their lives absolutely come unglued. It may take a week, a month, or a year and so on; but their life absolutely comes unglued. Do you know why? It is because what they are doing is mocking Almighty God. That is what they have done. It is serious stuff when we have been cleansed and we start living in sin again, that is a very serious place.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

Therefore, He says, “Hey, you do not need to tell anybody about what is going on. You need to go and take the offering to the priest.” The things back in the book of Leviticus—that we are going to be reading through here in a few weeks—the things that Moses commanded in the Law that was to be given, and an offering that was to be taken to the priest. This offering was to be offered and the priest would inspect whoever had the leprosy. The priest had to declare someone clean from leprosy. The priest could say, “You are clean now. You can go back into society. You can go back to temple. You can go back to synagogue. You can live inside the city. You can go back with your family.” The priest would declare you to be clean. Do you know what Jesus wanted this guy to do? He did not want him to break the law. He wanted him to obey the law. He wanted him to go to the priest so that the priest could declare him to be cleansed so that he could go back out, start having fellowship with his family, and be with his family, to enjoy his family. Not only that, but also so that everybody could see that this guy called Jesus made this guy that was full of leprosy, whole.

If you and I will live as we should live and stay away from sin, just as this man was a testimony to everybody in that country; Jesus Christ is the Messiah. He is the great power of Almighty God. These people knew that nobody could cleanse leprosy except God Almighty. They knew that. When the priest declared this guy to be cleansed then the people were going to know that the God of heaven had cleansed him.

Do you know what people know today? Sinner people know today that when someone’s life has changed that had been a drunk, alcoholic, or a sinner all of their life—when they can look at someone and see that their life has been changed—do you know what they know? They know that Jesus Christ has changed their lives. That is why it is so important that we stay away from sin. Do you know what I want? I want people to know that I am living for the God of heaven. I am living for Jesus Christ. He is the One who changed my life. How about you?

That is what He did here. He said, “Go and take your offering and give it to the priest. He will examine and inspect you. He will declare you cleansed and you can go and be with your family and so forth.” He told him not to say anything to anybody.

45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

One thing I want to say and I know that many times when we say this that we do not really understand what we are saying. When we are cleansed from our sin, I do not need and we do not need to go around beating on our chest and holding flags up, put badges all over ourselves to try to portray that we are somebody special, or we are somebody that is special in the eyes of Almighty God. What I am trying to say is this. We do not need to portray to the world that we are better than they are just because we have been cleansed. We know that we have been saved by the grace of Almighty God. Instead of telling

people, instead of trying to make ourselves feel superior to somebody else, let us tell people about the grace of God. Let us tell people how Jesus can change their lives. Let us tell them how Jesus can cleanse them and not try to separate ourselves from them in the sense that we act better than they are because we are no better than they are. We are not special people because he was lost, he was lost, I was lost, and everybody was lost. It does not matter what your name was or what your background was; we were lost. If we are saved today, we need to thank God for that. However, do not think that you are better than someone else is. You are not any better than the guy down on Second Street tonight that is whacked out on drugs, the guy laying in the gutter, the guy sleeping in a box that is under a bridge somewhere tonight because they do not have a home. You are not any better than they are and do not ever think that you are.

If you portray that, then you are ruining your testimony. You are also bringing reproach on yourself and on the cause of Christ. Do you know what the church is made up of? The church is made up of sinners that have been saved. That is what the church is made up of. Jesus Christ did not come to call the righteous, but He came to call sinners unto repentance. The church of Jesus Christ is made up of people who were lost, dirty, defiled, depraved, and who were doomed, damned and had no hope. The church is made up of people who are saved tonight and who have been cleansed. That is where we came from. That is who we are.

You are not any better than anybody else is. I am not any better than anybody else is. We are saved and on our way to heaven. Praise God for that! However, instead of telling how superior we are and how much that me and Jesus have it all worked out, instead of telling people that; let us tell people how great Jesus Christ is. Tell them how much Jesus loves them. Tell them how much He will forgive them, cleanse them, and save them if they will just come and approach Him in the right way.

Come humbly, as this guy did. Begging Him and beseeching Him, not questioning whether He has the ability or not, but having faith that when we ask the question, "Lord, please cleanse me. Lord, I know that if it is your will, you can cleanse me." That is faith. When we come in that manner, it moves the heart of Almighty God. I promise you that you will be cleansed.

Come—